

Castlemaine Naturalist



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SEPTEMBER 1981

Flowers of the Castlemaine District

RHYTIDOSPORUM PROCUMBENS
(syn Marianthus procumbens)

White Marianth

Flowers late Winter, Spring.



This dainty flower is fairly common throughout the district, but is not very obvious. being a twiggy, low growing undershrub.

The five-petalled star shaped flowers have maroon tips to the backs of the petals, while the buds have a maroon tinge.

The five stamens are set between the petals, as are the narrow, maroon sepals. The green capsule is superior (above the petals) and almost globular, with the short stigma emerging from the tip, barely higher than the stamens.

The small, crowded leaves are as illustrated, although Galbraith and Willis describe them as narrow, with three lobed or entire tips.

General meetings are held on the second Friday of the month at 8 p.m. in the Education Centre, Castlemaine.

Outings usually take place on the following Saturday, leaving the Ed. Centre at 1.30, after organising people into cars, etc.

Business meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of the month, at 8 p.m. in the Castlemaine Education Centre, Mostyn Street.

Any alterations in the above arrangements will be notified.

Members of the public and intending members are cordially invited to attend meetings or outings.

SIGNIFICANT TREES

As mentioned last month, the National Trust is in the process of establishing a register of significant trees in Victoria in order to create an awareness of their presence and to protect them in every way possible. A photographic competition is being held in conjunction with this. Those trees which are particularly vulnerable to damage or vandalism will have their locality withheld from general distribution.

Last month the categories of the photographic competition were listed. Trees will be considered for inclusion in the Register on the basis of the following categories :

1. Those of outstanding aesthetic significance.
2. Any tree outstanding for some aspect of its size
3. Any tree which is particularly old or venerable
4. Any tree having associations with an important historical event
5. Any tree associated with a well-known public figure
6. Any tree associated with aboriginal activities
7. Those trees which occur in a unique location including important landmarks, remnant native vegetation, etc.
8. Any species which is rare or of very localised distribution
9. Any tree of genetic or horticultural value which could be an important source of propagating stock
10. Any tree which exhibits a curious growth such as fusion of branches, abnormal outgrowths, etc.
11. Any stand or avenue of trees conforming to the above criteria

The trees may be indigenous or exotic, wild or cultivated.

Members who know of any such trees are asked to contact Ray Bradfield or Ern Perkins with as much detail as possible

WORLD'S MOST POISONOUS SNAKE

Which country has the honour of having the most poisonous snake ? The country is Australia, but the snake in question is not as you may think, the Tiger snake, nor even the Taipan. It is the Small-scaled snake (*Parademansia microlepidota*). Having been confused with other snakes, namely the Black snake, Brown snake, and Taipan, it was only in 1976 that it was recognized as a new genus and a new species.

When the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories compared the venom with that of the Eastern brown snake, the Tiger snake, and the Taipan, it was found to be more toxic than all of them, although fortunately Taipan antivenene proved effective against it.

THE VALUE OF REMNANT VEGETATION IN RURAL AREAS

(This is a summary of the address to the W.V.F.N.C.A. meeting at Bamba, by Mr W. Middleton)

In many parts of Victoria, the remnants of the original vegetation are found only along streams, roadsides and in private property, and are the most significant landscape element. They are often the only examples left of a district's flora and can contain rare and interesting plants

The value of remnant vegetation as a wildlife habitat is far more important than most people realise. The total area of the remnant, either scattered or partly linked, amounts to many thousand of hectares.

The vegetation remnants are of great value for birds. They are used by birds to roost, as a refuge, as a source of food and for nesting sites. They are essential for some migrating birds. As an example, in a 20 hectare strip of Wimmera woodland, surrounded by farmland, 61 species (including 25 nesting) were recorded in a single year. The peak population would be about 300 individuals.

Shrubs and trees are important. Single rows of open trees increase the risk of small birds and nests to predators. Thick vegetation with bushy shrubs is desirable. A road made at the edge of a reserve rather than along the centre will allow for denser vegetation.

Roadside vegetation is at risk from the activities of farmers, local government and government agencies. Activities such as road works, provision of communications, power and gas, burning off and spraying can all have a cumulative and irreversible effect.

Economic necessity has also forced farmers to sell off timber as a short term expedient. A good deal of evidence shows that shelter belts, farm trees etc are of importance to both livestock and crops, and that it is false economy to remove shelter.

Roadside vegetation is often removed as a fire control measure. Many firefighters are now realising that trees and shrubs along roads help in a case of fire in that they burn more slowly than does grass, and can help to control fire. Trees and shrubs require much less maintenance than grass areas.

If farmers, engineers and the public are aware of the problem, the decline in the amount of remnant vegetation will be slowed down. Financial incentives (e.g. grants for tree planting, or tax concessions) are probably needed. Much has been lost, but some can still be saved.

In last month's issue the program of the weekend was described. Members who are intending to attend may be interested in the following information :-

Accommodation

<u>Motel Avon</u>	Woods St.	Ph 97 1488	(8units)
<u>Shamrock Hotel</u>	Woods S.	97 1210	
<u>Mt Jeffcott Hotel</u>	Woods St	97 1011	
<u>Donald Hotel</u>	Woods St	97 1410	
<u>Caravan Park</u>	Borong Hwy.	97 1300 97 1562	(AH)

Take-Away Food

<u>Gallagher's Cafe</u>	Woods St	Sat. a.m. and 5 - 8 p.m. Sunday from 8 a.m.
<u>Howley's Grocery & Deli</u>	McCulloch St	Sat 8.30 - 1 p.m. Sun 8.30 - 1 p.m.
<u>Pearce's Cafe</u>	Woods St	Sat 8 - 12, 5 - 7 Sunday from 8 a.m.
<u>Fish Cafe</u>	Woods St	Sat 8 a.m. - 10.30 p.m. Sun from 8.30 a.m.

If sandwiches are required for Sunday, Oct 18, these should be ordered on the previous day at any of the above shops, to collect early Sunday morn. Bread guaranteed fresh

Petrol

Saturday - till 6 p.m. Sunday, from about 8.45 a.m.

Estimated distance of Sunday excursion, about 40 miles (65 km)

PRODUCING NEW PLANTS FROM CUTTINGS IN A HURRY

Scientists of the C.S.I.R.O. have developed a way of producing many plants from one cutting. A shoot tip is divided into many tiny fragments under sterile conditions, then cultured in a solution containing minerals, vitamins, sugar and plant hormones, under which conditions many shoots are produced which can be repeatedly subdivided to give many more shoots, each of which can form a young plant.

Using a technique such as this a nurseryman could very quickly produce large quantities of a desirable plant, however so far this has not yet been achieved. Oenophiles will be pleased to know however that the technique has been developed using grape vines.

(from CSIRO Scifile No 11.)

FEEDING AND ATTRACTING BIRDS TO YOUR GARDEN

by Terry Collins

Part 1

Magpies, Currawongs, Peewees, etc.

Construct a stand or acquire an old flat topped stump of about 20" diameter, and about $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft high and place it in a suitable spot. Magpies love minced steak so a tiny bit will attract them readily; but save your meal scraps from the dinner table. Stale bread, cakes, etc, softened with water or crumbled is liked by the Currawongs and smaller birds. Even an old cold meat bone with its gristle and fat is relished.

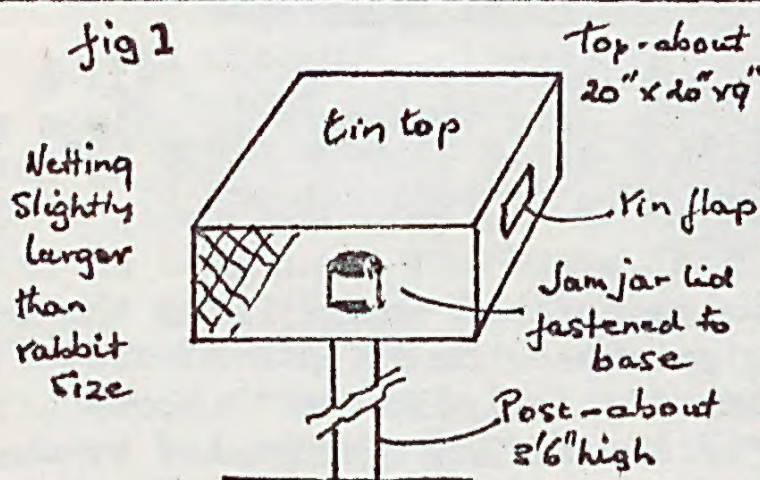
Supplementary feed :

This we find is very successful. Cut the fat from meat before you cook, e.g. chops. Anyway, according to the Medicos, too much fat is a health hazard so you will do yourself a favor and also support the birds. Save these pieces of fat by keeping them in a plastic bag in the freezer till you have sufficient to render down. Cut the fat into small pieces and render down in a suitable dish. When rendered down fairly well mix in as much pollard as the fat will absorb, this will on cooling become like a crumbly cake. All types of bird love this. The pollard is readily obtainable in small quantities from the local stock feed merchant.

Part 2

Small birds, Wrens, Silvereyes, Thornbills, etc.

fig 1



Make up a stand similar to the one shown in fig.1 and place near a suitable big bush or shrub with overhanging branches. The netting surround is necessary to keep out the larger birds.

Feed Mixture: We find the following to be eagerly sought after. Melt down some old dripping or discarded fat from the bacon and egg pan. We use an old fruit tin for this. Fill

the tin to about $\frac{1}{3}$ full and stir in a dessertspoon of honey, then enough pollard to make a tacky mix. When cooled this will become fairly solid. Each day, place enough inside the frame to suit the number of birds that come along. But with all bird feeding do not overfeed as this is bad for they must not become dependant on you. So just make it a titbit to attract them to your garden for your enjoyment.

to be continued

The Colac Field Naturalists' Club celebrated its 25th anniversary by holding a weekend campout for the Western Victoria Field Naturalists Clubs Association at Bambra. The campout was based at the Oberon High School camp between Winchelsea and Lorne at the edge of the Otway Ranges. The camp has two large dormitories a well equipped kitchen and a very large dining room, so that camping was very comfortable indeed.

The first excursion was to the Anglesea heathlands on the ocean front. Orchids seen here included Pink-fairies, and Small Helmet-orchids. Other wildflowers in bloom included Love Creeper, Showy and Red Parrot-pea, Propeller Plants, Dwarf Sheoak and Prickly Moses. Next stop was at the edge of the Alcoa coal mine, to see hillsides covered with red and white heath. Orchids were again abundant and the Tiny Sundew was also found here.

The excursion on Sunday travelled through the the Otway Forest to Lorne, stopping to admire the Narrow-leaf Wattle and Silver Wattle growing throughout the forest. Next stop was at the Sheoak Falls along the Great Ocean Road. The falls are framed by Drooping Sheoak so that the name is apt. The gradual change from the treeless windswept slopes near the mouth of the river to taller trees where the land is sheltered from the cold southerly winds added to the interest of this spot.

Lunch was at the Grey River picnic ground. The reserve is surrounded by giant Manna Gum, Mountain Grey-gum, Mountain Ash and Blackwood. The walk along the river through the groves of Tree Fern was a delight. The Fire-flies could be seen along the river bank, and two Bower Bird bowers were discovered; one of these was complete with blue ornaments.

The beauty of the Grey River Reserve contrasted sharply with the chaos and destruction at the next stop where the effects of clear-felling operations were seen. In recently felled areas there was a mess of mud and broken and uprooted trees. Older areas had been burned and the ground had been colonised by dense growths of weeds, growing among the charred stumps and branches. Perhaps this gave support for wood chipping; it would certainly lead to less waste and the area should be left in a tidier state. It was noted too that tree-fern gullies had been destroyed by the logging operations. Would they ever regenerate?

It was a most enjoyable weekend.

NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE

Boronia News : G.Sitch reports that untold thousands of Boronia are coming up after the fire. The whole hillside is green with the young plants. Also noticed were Grevillea and others.

Federal Land Use Policy : The A.C.F. believes that this is of very great importance; the F.N.C.V. will give a submission and is asking for evidence to include.

Closing date - September 16th.

P.O. Box : It was decided that we have so much cash that it is burning a hole in our pockets. Hence it was decided to invest in a P.O. Box.

Save the Rain Forests : see brochure included with this copy of the newsletter.

Mystery Excursion Attender : Who got his dates wrong, and so was the only person to attend the first two Wednesday excursions?

Western Australia Tour ?

How about a club group to go on Kingston Tours trip to the State of Excitement next year ?

23 days at about \$550.

Happenings now History

Events from the past - supplied by Ray Bradfield

A FISHY STORY

A fish, whose species appears to be unknown to ichthyologists, was caught on Tuesday night on a mud bank near Williamstown, and was taken on shore to the water police station, where it now lies. It weighs about 300 lbs, and in appearance resembles a sun-fish. It is 5 ft. in length, 4 ft. broad, and about 18 inches thick, with a small head and small round mouth. Between the tips of the fins it measures 6 ft. The tail, which possesses powerful muscles, is 1 ft. long and 4 ft. broad. The skin is dark and thick, without scales, and the eyes are remarkably small. Notwithstanding its great weight and rotund figure, the animal appears to have been possessed of propelling force sufficient to move through the water with great rapidity.

from the files of the Mt Alexander Mail

August 21, 1868

President :	Mr G. Sitch	Ph 72 2734
Secretary :	Mrs M. Lindsay	72 2720
Treasurer :	Mr F. Meyer	72 1958
Newsletter:	Mr G. Broadway	72 2513

Coming Events

Friday, Sept. 11.

Meeting : "Beekeeping"

Speaker : Mr R. Goodman

Sunday, Sept. 13

Outing : The Muckleford Forest

This will be with the Maryborough F.N.C., and will be mainly to examine the regrowth on the burned areas of the Feb. '81 bushfires. We will look first at the area around the Gowar School, and then go down to the burned area near the R. W. & B mine. Thence to the Boronia, to see it regenerating.

Roads ? Goodish(!)

Meet at the Education Centre at 1.45 or at the Gowar School at 2.

Wednesday, Sept. 16

Outing : Garfield, with Ron Johnson

Meet at Chewton Football Ground at 4.15 p.m.

Monday, Sept. 21

Outing: Walk from the High School to Expedition Pass Reservoir for lunch, then return by a different route.

Pace ? Leisurely, while keen members scour the bush for specimens floral and faunal, and maybe geological.

Depart from High School at 9.30, return as the mood takes us.

Wednesday, Sept 23

Outing : The North Castlemaine burnt area.

Meet at 118 Blakeley Road at 4.15 p.m. Leader R. Mills (If someone remembers to tell her).

Wednesday, Sept. 30.

Outing : Railway Crossing, Muckleford.

Meet at Gowar School at 4.15. Leader, G. Sitch. (He probably knows).

Wednesday, Oct 7.

Outing : Expedition Pass Reservoir

Meet, outside Castle Motel at 4.15. Leader E.P..

Friday, Oct. 9

Meeting: Subject, "The Insects

Speaker, Mr H. Allen of Bendigo F.N.C.

Saturday, Oct. 10

Outing : Taradale

Wednesday, Oct. 14

Outing: Who knows where ? Only Rita

Friday, November 13

Meeting : Subject, "The Birds of Mosquito Flat".

Speaker, Dr. F. Harrap of Ballarat F.N.C..

Saturday, Nov 14

Outing: Bells Swamp. Depart from Ed. Centre at 1.20



RESCUE *the*
RAINFORESTS



KEEP THIS SECTION

*Please fill out the attached postcard
in your own words.*

RAINFORESTS

- It is internationally and nationally important that each state of Australia preserve its remaining rainforests. Preservation of rainforests is urged by the U.N. Environment Program, UNESCO, and many other international bodies.

If current trends of rainforest clearing continue approximately 15% to 20% of all species on earth will be lost within 20 years.

VALUES

- Australia's rainforests contain many plants found nowhere else in the world. Some yield compounds valuable to medicine — such as alkaloids which are used to treat heart disease, cancer etc.

About one third of all eastern Australian butterflies, some 113, cannot exist without rainforest. The rainforests of North Queensland are the home of the musk rat-kangaroo, the only living link between the kangaroo-like and possum-like marsupials.

WRITE NOW!

The Australian Conservation Foundation urges
the preservation of all Australia's rainforests.

Dear

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Signature _____

AFFIX
STAMP
HERE

Mr Joh Bjelke Petersen,
Premier of Queensland,
Parliament House,
Brisbane, Queensland 4000



THREATS

- Australia has lost three quarters of its rainforest, from 8 million ha to 2 million ha, and the loss continues. Lowland rainforests north of Cairns are threatened by sugar cane plantations. The primeval rainforests of Mt. Windsor Tableland, inland of Cairns, are now being logged.

The temperate rainforests of north-west Tasmania are destined for paper pulp.

By the mid 1990s NSW rainforests will no longer provide commercial quantities of timber because of over-exploitation.

ALTERNATIVES

- Technology makes it possible for us not to use rainforest timbers, many non-rainforest timbers can now substitute for rainforest timbers.

Reforestation of cleared land has potential for taking the pressure off rainforest areas in the future.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Australian Conservation Foundation,
672B Glenferrie Road,
Hawthorn. Victoria 3122.
Telephone (03) 819 2888.
Donations over \$2.00 tax deductible.

